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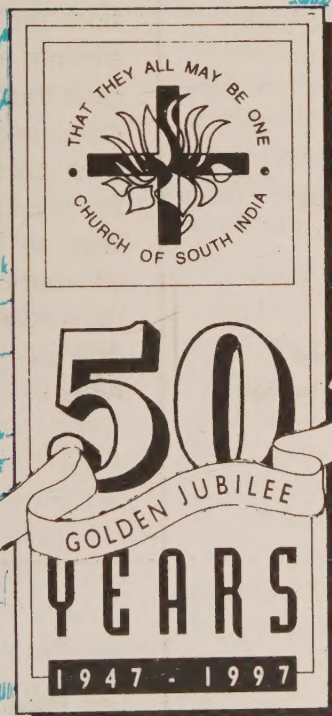
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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

MARCH 1997



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Opinions expressed by contributors do not commit the C.S.I.

THE SOUTH INDIA CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

MARCH 1997

Editor Incharge , SICM

REV. DR. P. SURYA PRAKASH

United Theological College

63, Miller's Road, P.O. Box 4613

Bangalore-560 046. India.

Phone (Res.): 080-3435621.

Hon. Business Manager

PROF. GEORGE KOSHY, General Secretary

Synod C.S.I. Centre

5, Whites Road

Royapettah, Chennai-600 014

Phone : 8521566

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Easter Praise

Eternal God and Parent of all humanity, by whose power our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. With the whole company of your people in heaven and on earth we rejoice and give thanks, that he who was dead is alive again and lives for evermore; that he is with us now and always, and that nothing can separate us from your love in him; that he has opened the way to your kingdom and brought us the gift of eternal life. All glory, praise and thanksgiving, all worship, honour and love, be yours, almighty and ever lasting God, in time and for all eternity. Amen.

—Adapted from James M. Todd

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Lives again to give Life . . .

Jesus coming back to life after his cruel persecution and death lies at the heart of the Christian faith. The early Christian testimony is solely based on the good news of the resurrection of Jesus. The Gospels do not explain resurrection but the resurrection explains the Gospels. Believing in resurrection is not an appendage to the Christian faith, but it is the Christian faith. For believers in Christ, the event of resurrection of Jesus is not simply a matter of history but of contemporary Christian experience. St. Peter who himself is a firsthand witness to this great event testifies: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his mercy gave us new birth into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! (1 Peter 1.3).

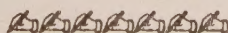
The resurrection of Jesus Christ has revealed God's mercy to humanity. God raised Jesus not just from his death alone but from the dead. Therefore as St. Paul says: Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died (1 Cor. 15.20). The resurrection of Jesus begins a new chapter in the life of humanity. The humanity is given a new lease of life after death. That death is not the end but life in Christ, a new beginning. This is the message of resurrection. Jesus lives again not just to continue his life, but to give life to all who are dead through the trespasses and sins (Eph. 2.1). It is all because of the eternal mercy of God. God's steadfast love endures forever (Ps. 136). Resurrection of Jesus is a firm testimony to this fact. The resurrection experience is not confined to life after death alone but also to life here and now. As St. Francis of Assisi has prayed when love is sowed where there is hatred, when pardon is given where there is injury, when faith is exercised where there is doubt, when hope is instilled where there is despair, when light shines where darkness is, and when joy replaces sadness, there is the power of resurrection at work.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has reaffirmed that God's nature is always to give something good to humanity. In this resurrection, God has given the possibility of a new birth which has been a puzzle to intellectuals like Nicodemus (John 3). Peter, a timid person, who denies his identity, because of the possibility created by the resurrection of Jesus, not only affirms his loyalty to Jesus, but is willing to die for him. Saul, a persecutor of Christians becomes Paul of the Gospel of Christ. St. Augustine a person of pleasures becomes the saint of the church. John Wesley's heart is strangely warmed; Sundar Singh becomes a Christian Sadhu, and an apostle of the bleeding feet; Panditha Ramabai becomes a great reformer and liberator of women; and many others, all because of the possibility of new life. Jesus rose again to give life.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has given to humanity a living hope. Christian hope has been the greatest force to sustain life inspite of all hopelessness. This Christian hope is the outcome of the resurrection of Jesus. There is crisis all around, but Christ gives through his resurrection a living hope to live life meaningfully. St. Cyril of Jerusalem said: The root of all good works is the hope of resurrection. Jesus rose again to give life.

Therefore Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The celebration of the resurrection of Jesus is an occasion to praise God. We praise God for his mercy. It is nothing but the eternal mercy of God that has enabled humanity to experience new birth with a new hope in life. Jesus rose again to give life to you, to me, to our church and all communities in the society. May the gift of new life be shared with all people on earth. Let us say with Martin Luther: Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.

Sd. REV. DR. P. SURYA PRAKASH
Editor In-charge



South India Churchman

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The Moderator's Message

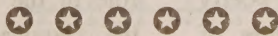
The observance of Lent culminating in the Holy Week with Easter Sunday is a time of profound experience for the churches. The time is marked with special cottage prayer meetings and worship services. We experience the presence of the living Christ as we meditate on the cross and resurrection. The cross and resurrection of Jesus affirm that God loves this world and has made the supreme sacrifice for it. The Cross of Christ stands as the living image and symbol of the suffering humanity and the rest of creation. There is still darkness (While it is still dark, John 20.1) in the world. But the cross and resurrection of Jesus continue to bring hope in a hopeless situation. In dying and being raised from death, God has provided in Jesus Christ a living hope for all creation for a new life with peace, justice and equality.

This year is a special year for the Church of South India as we celebrate our Golden Jubilee. St. Paul rightly affirms 'In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself' 2 Cor. 5.19. He goes on to add 'not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us'. As we celebrate the Jubilee it is time of renewal and reconciliation for us as the church. Every Jubilee is a time of initiating new meaningful relationships (Leviticus 25). It is a time of restoring the broken relationships based on narrow and parochial interests. Jesus pronounces forgiveness and restores broken relationships from the cross. Crucifixion is one of the most brutal process of capital punishment. While undergoing this terrible agony, Jesus prays for forgiveness. He prays for forgiveness not for his friend's but for his tormenters and persecuters. How could this be possible? It is possible because Jesus loves not only his friends but also his

enemies. He died for the whole world. Jesus does not seek to retaliate. As St. Peter testifies: when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered he did not threaten (1 Peter 2. 23). Jesus meets rejection with forgiveness, hatred with love. Humanly speaking it is difficult to forgive. And it is much more difficult to forget. We cannot simply brush aside the scars of the injury. They will be there. When Jesus appears to his disciples after his resurrection, he shows them his wounds. They are there, not as signs of hatred but as symbols of his love for humanity. The wounded hands of Jesus remind us that forgiveness is not simply concerned with forgetting but above all, it is concerned with transforming relationships. The past can be transformed by the power of Christ's forgiveness. Forgiveness may appear to be weakness. But it is the most powerful influence. Forgiveness helps not only the person who is forgiven, but also the forgiver. All the remorse, all the feelings of enmity, hatred and jealousy are removed from the heart. When forgiveness is not extended, both the persons suffer. (Read Romans 12. 14-21).

Let us rededicate ourselves for the cause for which Jesus Christ died and rose again, namely salvation of humanity and the whole creation, through establishing just relationships among people irrespective of creed or colour; age or gender. Jesus Christ as St. Paul says, is the first fruit of this new creation. Jesus Christ shows the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. May the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation pervade all our relationships both in the church and society.

SD. THE MOST REV. DR. VASANT P. DANDIN
Moderator and Bishop
The Church of South India



ISET Seminar on Theology and Poetry

October 24-27, 1996 at ECC, Bangalore

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If theology is the perception of the Reality which is the ground of all existence, poetry is the appreciation and celebration of the discovery. The task is the same; but the instruments/tools we employ are different. If intellectual is the outer approach to truth, the mystical is the inner. God, the ground of all existence, 'in whom we move and have our being' can never be fully conceived or conceptualized. Theological formulations are very often communicated as faith affirmations. Poetry is primarily 'language at its distilled form' and it 'comes as naturally as leaves to a tree' (Keats). Its aim is to celebrate life and to keep it overflowing.

The picture of a garden in the book of Genesis speaks of the aesthetic taste of God, the architect and the artist. In making life worth living, the trees, the flowers, the animals, the birds, the streams and 'the lilies of the field' have their role to play. The basic question is whether we have acquired the 'cosmic sensibility' to decode the language of God inscribed in flora and fauna. As beauty is truth and truth beauty, the highest can not be expressed but can only be acted, as Goethe puts it. The task of the artist is to affirm that 'medium is the message'. Human language is inadequate to grasp all that is given in the order of creation.

In order to become truly human, one has to imbibe in himself/herself the spirit of 'cosmic sensibility'. This is realized only through 'Silence'. 'Silence is the greatest revelation' (Lao-tse). Man is prone to listen to the 'noises' around. The voice of the creator God comes to us in silence. The cosmic is always in our inner life, but we must call it out. In this respect, the theologian and the poet must work together to read the language of life. The modern life has become so complex, so mechanized, so commercialized and so busy that there is no time 'to stand and to stare'. A theological understanding of nature-eco-spirituality has emerged as an integral aspect of theological learning. Spirituality is not moral acts or acts of virtue, but it is a total attitude to life which is the gift of God.

Creativity of the human expressed in art and poetry is an ontological reflection on the Ultimate Nature of

Reality. It is high time for us to do away with the distinction between Christian art/poetry and non-Christian art-poetry, if any. **Whoever is nearer to the Centre is an artist or poet!** The cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ provide the Church new paradigms to judge whether a particular piece of art/poetry is nearer to the divine bosom. To illustrate this point let me quote from a celebrated poet of Kerala, N.V. Krishna Warriar. In one of his poems, entitled '**Mohandas Gandhi and Nathuram Godse** NV writes:

In the queue, stands Gandhi
For rice, and presses forward
Close by, in a new car seated
Godse in his pump moves.

As the poem advances Gandhi sees how Godse grows into a monster and sucks the blood of the people. Isn't it a true picture of our country today? Let the Almighty raise more poets like N.V. to write poems of anguish on 'World's Leviathans'.

In God's order of creation, the poet appreciates and eulogizes the richness of diversity in the world. In an orchestra, there are several notes. All of them are held together for harmony. Interlinking and de-linking of fragments should happen in one's search for 'cosmic sensibility'. This is what we call 'wider ecumenism'. The Gospel which is the message of wholeness speaks of the reintegration of the impaired state of the physical, psychological, sociological and spiritual realms of life. Let us, therefore, practice the right kind of **Sadhana** to get a **glimpse** of the Ultimate either through theological reflection or through a poetic vision. Our aim is to enable all-the human and the non-human to be received as guests in the New Jerusalem.

REV. DR. M.J. JOSEPH
Principal, ISET.

Group Reflection, October 27, 1996

Topic : Theology-Poetry-Communication

Poetic symbols and imageries do play a significant role in the art of communication. The titles of some of the classical literary works like *Mayoorasandesam* by

Keralavarma Valigakovil Thamburan bring vivid imageries of Nature. This is also made explicit in paintings and other art forms. The Ajanta and the Ellora paintings do carry messages for the posterity in lucid imageries. They are truly poems in letter and spirit and they portray the down-to-earth experience of the people who lived in a particular period in history. They depict the throbbing of the human heart in vibrant symbols. This legacy is to be appreciated and celebrated in all levels of spirituality. Truly speaking, some of the icons in the Orthodox tradition of the Church are not merely art forms, but they two embody the best and the noblest language of the heart in poetry. In other words, art and poetry come closer and they dwell together as brothers and sisters in the family of communication. This fact is to be recognised and celebrated in worship in undaunted spirit. A few points are noted with special reference to liturgy, worship and preaching.

1. Liturgical Prayers

The ancient liturgies of Syriac Origin are full of biblical symbolisms which emanate effluent sparks. A line from the Sedera of St. James Liturgy is quoted to illustrate the point. 'Let our sins be consumed as thorns and thistles are consumed and reduced to ashes by fire,' is an imagery of par excellence. In the judicious use of such imageries the cult of modern world—the flesh and the ego—is broken into pieces and is judged as ignoble.

In worship service organised with eco-bias, the formation of a *mandala* has immense theological and poetic significance. A cosmic representation enacted through the union of *Panchabootha* really portrays the dimension of an eco-friendly community holding values of reverence for life, it reverberates in our ears the age old slogan of the Indian Culture- 'Sathyam - Sivam - Sundaram'.

2. Symbols - Universal and local

The indigenous Christian worship should give due recognition to the place of flora and fauna in expressing the inter-relatedness of the whole cosmos to the creator God. The creator God is to be worshipped and adored where He manifests His majesty at its best. The Indian festival like Pongal, Onam, Deepavali, etc. have much to speak to the devotees in their pursuit of spiritual truth. The use of mango and neem leaves do have their lessons to communicate to us. The symbols used in worships should be familiar to the people's culture which alone can transmit the musings of the heart. There are universal symbols like dove, water, air, fragrance, sharing of good, etc. could be used as imageries for conveying spiritual truths. In India nature symbols like sandalwood paste,

lotus flower, coconut, milk, palm leaves, etc., are to be widely used in worship service. It is a pity that even the nature-produce do carry tags of caste discrimination in the presence of the one God in whose presence there is no partiality! To the Lord, the flower is only a symbol of offering - offering of the penitent heart at His feet.

3. Eucharistic Elements - Bread and Wine

The use of ordinary elements in the eucharist - bread and wine involves matters of tradition, dogma and pietism. It is not quite easy to bring about a change in the use of the elements for reasons which are numerous. However, it must be remembered that the substance used by Jesus was taken from the ordinary food of the people. The question that remains unanswered is about the use of language. If the Lord had given us the words of institution in Aramaic language, what is the legitimacy of the Church to give up the same language in celebrating the Sacrament? Do we have the right to condemn outrightly some of the practices prevalent in the newly-formed free churches particularly in Africa, Philippines, etc.

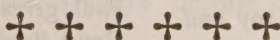
4. Offerings

The offering of nature's gifts in worship services has a long tradition in the life of the church. But the offering of money gradually replaced all other offerings without giving adequate place for the offering of the other produce of Nature. The idea of caring for the needy is the philosophy behind it. Therefore the offering in cash and kind should be encouraged.

5. Music

Music has become an integral part of worship. The use of indigenous instruments is a matter of culture which is indeed a question of justice. Listening to the music of nature - murmuring of trees and plants, chirping of birds, roaring sound of the sea, buzzing of bees, twittering of sparrows, etc., have yet to find a place in praising the creator God in times of worship. The gestures used in the worship service - like kiss of peace - has tremendous significance. They are both art and poetry. It is art in the sense that it draws the attention of the community through visual aids. It is poetry in the sense that it touches the heart of devotee by evoking feelings of oneness and harmony. That which transcends the boundary of the caged mind is truly poetic.

Report prepared by
REV. DR. M.J. JOSEPH
Principal, ISET.



Gethsemane: A Model of Crisis Management

Matthew 26. 36-46; Mark 14.32-42; St. Luke 22.39-53

Different people react differently in confused times. As the tempo of events increases, let us see how people respond?

The anguish of Christ (Luke 22.42-44).

In his life-time Jesus had to make some difficult decisions. The temptations in the desert were only the beginning. Even at the end of his life, when the shadow of the cross fell threatening over his path, Jesus prays: *Father if it is possible take this cup of suffering from me.* It is the first time that Jesus asks God something for himself. It is an expression of his needs, feelings, fears and agony. A desperate human reaction. No where the humanity of Jesus is so evident than at his passion. The incarnation of Jesus is very vividly portrayed not at his birth but at his death. Fear can distort perspectives. But Jesus grops into the mind of God to stay in tune to God's will. *Yet not my will, but your will be done.*

How do we react to situations of suffering and hardship? Do we look for people to blame and so excuse ourselves from getting involved? This can happen to us too. May be it is happening right now. But we have our comforting hope. Jesus has been there before: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb. 4.15-16).*

Gethsemane has become a place of testing, where Jesus has to fight a supreme battle and make a supreme surrender: *Your will be done.* Jesus always keeps to the will of the father. He tells his disciples: *My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work (John 4.34).* Obeying God's will is spiritual food. *I have not spoken on my own, but the father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the*

father has told me, (John 12.49-50). Jesus surrenders completely to God's will in his life. He teaches the disciples the prayer where we need to seek only the fulfillment of God's will. *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt. 6.10).* Now the question is: What is God's will and how do we know it? Yes, there is God's will. But it is not for us to know it. Even Jesus does not know it at this point. *If it is your will...* But what is important is to commit oneself to God's will. It has been given to humanity to know God's will in general. *He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you; but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6.8).* *God so loved the world and that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him, should not perish but have eternal life (John 3.16).* *The Lord is not slow about his promise as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3.9).* This is the general will of God. Jesus wants to obey this will as well as the special will of God in his life. What is it? Jesus himself says: *For the son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10.45).* Jesus had a baptism to undergo (Luke 12.50). Now the time has come for it. The baptism on the cross. This was the acceptance of the will of God. As John testifies; *Behold the lamb of God that was slain before the foundation of the world.* Christ came to do God's will (Heb. 10.5-7). And God's will is sovereign (James 4.13-16. Not only there is a baptism to be baptized with but there is a cup from which to drink. The cup of suffering. The cup was used for drinking both wine and poison. In the event of the cross it refers to the bitter suffering. Jesus by drinking this cup of suffering, the cup of suffering becomes the cup of salvation and redemption. David could sing in anticipation: *I will lift up the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord (Ps. 116.13).*

Only those who do God's will enter the kingdom (Mt. 7.21). They are the real relatives of Jesus (Mk. 3.35). Paul gives us the way to know and to do God's will: **Read Romans 12. 1-2.** *God helps us to do his will (Phil. 2.12, 13).*

Gethsemane has become a testing place for the disciples. Jesus tells them: *Stay here and watch with me.* Such a simple request that they should keep awake and pray for him. But they sleep. Jesus cries out: *My soul is ready to break with grief, stop here and stay awake with me (Mark 14.34).*

The Lethargy of the Disciples (Luke 22.40, 45, 46)

Jesus prays to overcome the temptation of running away in the time of severe testing (v. 42). He wants his disciples to do the same collectively, but sorrow exhausts them (v.45). What kind of prayer is expected of us? Eleven of his disciples sleep and the other is active in betraying.

The Intimacy of betrayal (Luke 22.47-48)

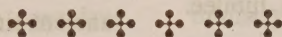
One of the most quoted events in literature is the kiss of Judas. The irony of this event is that a gesture of affection becomes an act of betrayal. This draws home the fact that many of us who, still, declare our love for Christ may publicly betray him by our actions. Peter reacts wrongly. He cuts the ear of the servant of the high priest.

Helping those who harm (Luke 22.49-51)

Jesus does not gloat but extends his healing hand to the wounded (v.51). Jesus knows his scriptures. *Do not rejoice when your enemies fall, and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble (Prov. 24.17).* Pain is pain even when a wicked person suffers. Jesus' response is an act of acceptance. *There is a time for everything (Eccl. 3.11).* This is the hour of darkness.

It becomes the place of their deepest failure. Jesus asks: *Could you not watch one hour?* Jesus longs for human companionship and support. If only Peter had stayed awake and prayed, probably he would not have denied Jesus thrice. Jesus understands the human weakness and says: *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.* Gethsemane is being enacted every day. *If any one sin we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the righteous.* Jesus prays for us, for his church and for the world everyday through his spirit. *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.* Temptations are all around us. The only way to overcome them is to be in companion with Christ. To be in Christ, is to have fellowship with him in prayer.

REV. DR. P. SURYA PRAKASH



ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF THE MODERN AGE

Compiled and Edited by Prof. Mathew Koshy, Punnackadu

This book is intended to stimulate and widen discussion on the most vital issues facing humanity. Any one who nurtures hope for the future of the Earth and her inhabitants must read this book.

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Jubilee – A Call to Renewal

By J. RUSSELL CHANDRAN

Introduction

The inauguration of the Church of South India on 27th September, 1947, was hailed by churches all over the world as the most significant event of the Church Union Movement. This year, in 1997, the church celebrates the Golden Jubilee of that event. It is also significant that the year coincides with the Golden Jubilee year of the nation's political independence.

It is good to ask and reflect on how the event may be meaningfully celebrated. It has become customary today to celebrate different Jubilees, such as the Silver Jubilee at the completion of 25 years, the Golden Jubilee at 50 years, Diamond Jubilee at 60 years and Platinum Jubilee at 75 years. The CSI is celebrating the Golden Jubilee.

Jubilee in the Bible

It is, however, good to bear in mind that the word *Jubilee* is derived from the Bible. According to Leviticus 25:8-31 every fiftieth year, namely the year following the seventh Sabbatical year is to be declared as the Jubilee Year. The year is inaugurated by the blowing of the trumpet or ram's horn (*yobel* in Hebrew). Obviously the word jubilee is derived from *yobel*. The main point of the Jubilee Year is that the people are asked to 'Hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberation in the land for all its inhabitants' (Lev. 25:10). All are to be restored to their ancestral holdings and to their families. Those sold in slavery are to be liberated. Debts are to be cancelled. The Jubilee year, therefore, is a year of emancipation and restoration, proclaimed by the blast of the trumpet throughout the land. During the year the fields were to be kept untilled, slaves were to be set free, lands and houses that had been sold were to revert to their former owners or their heirs.

The institution of the Jubilee Year does, however, raise some problems. There is no historical evidence to show whether this was ever practiced within Israel or elsewhere. Gnana Robinson, in an article on A NEW ECONOMIC ORDER: THE CHALLENGE OF THE BIBLICAL JUBILEE has drawn attention to some of the

problems and the views held by different Biblical scholars. According to J. Wellhausen 'it is an artificial institution superimposed upon the years of fallow, regarded as harvest sabbath after the analogy of the Pentecost'¹ J. Morgenstern regards it as entirely 'theoretical and unrealistic'.² Gnana Robinson has pointed out that Neh. 5 which describes 'the socially and economically explosive situation among the returned exiles' does not make any reference to the Jubilee Year institution. The Sabbatical Year is mentioned but not the Jubilee Year. This may suggest that the Jubilee Year was not known at that time.³ He further observes, 'Moreover, the institution of the Jubilee Year appears redundant and superfluous in the context of the seventh year release institutions, which were available from very ancient times (the year of land release — Ex. 23:10; Deut. 31:10; Slave release — Ex. 21:1-11; Deut. 15:12ff; Debt release — Deut. 15:1-15). If these heptad-institutions were practiced, and we have every reason to believe that they were, at least occasionally, then we cannot think of a situation which warranted the need for the Jubilee Year.... One may positively be sure that the heptad-institutions and the Jubilee Year could not have been practiced at the same place at the same time'. After indicating the different alternatives Gnana Robinson holds that the most plausible explanation is that the Jubilee Year was innovated at a time when the heptad-institutions were no more practiced.⁴

Whatever be the origin of the concept of the Jubilee Year it had come to be regarded as an integral part of the vision for the future, the vision of the fulfillment of God's righteousness. It is the Jubilee Year which prophet Isaiah had in mind when he spoke of 'the Year of the

¹ J. Wellhausen: *Geschichte Israelis* 1, Berlin, 1878, p. 122. Quoted by Gnana Robinson in *A New Economic Order-The Challenge of the Biblical Jubilee* in Samuel Amirthan: *A Vision for Man*, Madras, C.L.S. 1978. p. 365.

² J. Morgenstern: *Year of Jubilee*. IDB 2.p. 1002. Quoted by Gnana Robinson. op.cit. p. 365.

³ Gnana Robinson. *Ibid*.

⁴ Gnana Robinson. op. cit p. 365-66

Lord's favour' in his messianic vision (Is. 61:2). Jesus quoted this in his Nazareth manifesto (Luke 4:19). What prophet Ezekiel speaks of as the *year of liberty* in Ezek. 46:17 is obviously the Jubilee year.

The CSI Jubilee

When we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Church of South India the main thrust should be the message of liberation that God calls us to proclaim. Discerning the different forms of bondage we will do well to reflect on the liberation experience which will lead the church towards the future.

1. *Renewal of the Ordained Ministry*

In the practice of the ordained ministry wrong traditions have developed and the people as well as the ministers are to be liberated from the mistakes of the past. The problem is not peculiar to the CSI but experienced in other churches too. However the celebration of the Golden Jubilee gives an opportunity for the CSI to reflect on the problem and take steps towards the renewal of the Ministry.

Apostle Paul in 1Cor. 12 and Ephesians 4 has listed a number of ministries, namely, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, miracle workers, healers, speakers in tongues, leaders etc., suggesting the manifoldness of the ministry. In the letter to Ephesians the apostle speaks of the ministries as the gift of the risen Lord to the Church. In Eph. 4:12 the purpose of giving to the church the gift of the manifold ministries is 'to equip the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ'. The ministry belongs to the whole people of God, not just to the ordained ministers. The work of the ministry is committed to the whole community of believers. The role of the ordained ministry is to be enablers, pioneers or facilitator for the whole people to be involved in the ministry. It is for this purpose the whole people are to be built up as the body of Christ.

The ministry is essentially the ministry of Jesus Christ, made known through his earthly ministry, and meant to be continued by the church, the community of Christ's disciples. The ministry of Jesus Christ is for the purpose of transforming all areas of life and so has many different dimensions. It cannot be fulfilled by any single form of ministry, or by any single individual or group. It is also important to remember that the Ministry is not a static structure. New situations keep arising and in response the Church has to develop new ministries. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, new forms of ministry are developed to respond to new needs in different

situations. For example the church has been guided to develop several special ministries to deal with different problems or issues such as the outbreak of AIDS, Refugees, Migrant workers, broken homes etc.

The tradition of the three-fold ministry of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons is to be understood as structure for interpreting the manifold ministries, witnessing to and expressing the totality of the ministry of Christ, the whole people of God responding to the needs of the whole world. The Bishop symbolises the unity of the Church called to bring unity for the humankind. The ministry of the Presbyter is essentially for the proclamation of the Gospel, through the preaching and teaching ministry. The ministry of Deacons need reinstatement as the ministry of Justice and Service, reflecting an important dimension of the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is unfortunate that in almost all churches the diaconate is held as a subordinate ministry, a stepping-stone to become presbyters. If we rightly interpret the role of the diaconate in the New Testament and in the early church it is meant to express the Church's prophetic concern for justice and involvement in service. It should also be borne in mind that no form of ministry is exclusively assigned to any particular order. The bishop is also a presbyter and is committed to the proclamation of the Gospel. The deacon is also to be involved in the ministry of proclamation.

The ministers, Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, should be committed to fulfil the functions for which they are set apart and ordained so that the people will have the benefit of the authentic ministry of the Word and the Sacraments and pastoral care. Pastoral care with preaching and teaching is integral to the exercise of the ministry. Jesus' mandate to Peter in John 21:15-17, feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep suggest different levels of care and nurture according to the different levels of maturity of the people, not only physically but also spiritually.

For the renewal of the ministry we need to look at some wrong traditions in the minds of people about the role of the ministers, based on wrong notions about the minister as priest. The Christian use of the word priest is derived from the word presbyter, even though in the Bible the word is used for the person offering sacrifices and other ritual functions. In the New Testament it translates the Greek word *hierous*. Because of the wrong associations in the minds of people about the meaning of priest it is good to avoid its usage for the ordained ministers. The minister needs to be liberated and protected from the poojary concept which has vitiated the practice of the ministry. It has become customary for people to assume that if a presbyter or another ordained minister was present at a function he/she is the right person to be asked to lead a prayer, irrespective of the fact that some lay persons

can lead a prayer much more effectively than many ordained persons. In the New Testament the term priest is applied only to Jesus Christ and to the Church as the whole people of God, and never to any section of the ministry. The role of the priest is to mediate between God and the humans. Only Jesus Christ and the whole people of God, the Church, have this mission of mediation between God and the World. The ordained ministers do not have this role. Without their assistance the people have direct access to the presence of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The ministry also needs to be freed from wrong concepts of and attitudes to authority and power. Secular concepts have vitiated the notions of authority and power associated with the ordained ministry. Proper functioning of the ministry is meant to restore the servant image of the church witnessing to the Servant Lord, Jesus Christ.

Particularly the Bishop's office in the CSI as well as in other churches has been associated with wrong exercise of power and authority. Certainly the dignity of the office has to be maintained and due respect has to be given to the bishops and other ordained ministers. But it would be inappropriate for the ordained ministry to be associated with the exercise of magisterial authority as in secular life. The authority of bishops, presbyters and deacons, etc. is subject to the authority in Christ, who took the image of a servant and submitted himself to be crucified. It is the role of the ordained ministry to draw attention to Christ's authority and to enable people to submit to his authority, always remembering that the risen Lord was also the crucified Lord. The ministers are heralds of the Gospel of Christ. As John the Baptist said the ministers also should say, 'He must increase and I must decrease' (John 3:30).

One of the problems in the CSI has been that Bishops and Presbyters have been so much involved in administration of the different service institutions, educational, medical and others, that they do not have sufficient time for the ministries for which they have been ordained. The institutions also suffer because the ordained persons do not necessarily have the knowledge and expertise needed for the institutions. Even though the bishops may be members of different management committees they should not be required to chair them. Service Institutions and programmes should be guided and managed mainly by specialists in the respective areas. The main point is that bishops and presbyters should be sufficiently free to fulfil the basic functions for which they are set apart.

It is also good to take seriously an important insight in the ecumenical document known as the BEM (Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry) document unanimously adopted

by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in 1982. In interpreting the concept of episcopal succession the document makes a distinction between *guarantee* and *sign* and says that episcopal succession is not a guarantee for continuity and unity of the Church, but is a sign for continuity and unity.⁵ It provides a mandate for maintaining continuity and unity. The same distinction is valid for interpreting ordination and consecration. The receiving of the laying on of hands by presbyters and bishops is no guarantee for receiving the gifts needed for the ministry. It is a sign for the gifts and, therefore, implies a mandate to seek constantly to be aware of the gifts God gives through the Holy Spirit for the exercise of the Ministry. It is a sign both for the persons ordained and consecrated and for the people for whose care and nurture they are set apart to be consciously and deliberately aware of the ministry for which the Holy Spirit gives the gifts.

It is good to bear in mind that according to the Constitution of the CSI the basic functions of the bishop are general pastoral oversight of all members of the diocese, leadership in evangelization, teaching, worship and ordination.⁶ It is the duty of the bishops, individually as well as collectively to see that the members are nurtured in the true faith of the Church. Equally important is the bishop's role in checking that those who lead the people in worship are adequately prepared for giving the congregations the benefit of the richness of the different traditions of worship that have come into the CSI through the union as well as openness to further union with other churches. We need to be constantly vigilant that the bishops fulfil these functions unhampered by other commitments.

2. Renewal of the Mission Policy

Liberation from wrong missionary policy is also an important objective to be borne in mind. Steps have to be taken to remedy a serious handicap which has come to the Christian communities in Asia because of the complete break with the cultural and religious heritage. The earlier missionary policy of requiring the converts to give up all that belonged to the former faith has resulted in the cultural, religious and spiritual impoverishment of the Indian Christians. We have been alienated from the national heritage. The charge sometimes made by the Hindu nationalist critics that Indian Christians are a denationalized community is not altogether baseless. Christ came to fulfill not to destroy, to enrich not to impoverish.

⁵ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, Geneva. W.C.C. 1982. p. 29.

⁶ *The Constitution of the Church of South India*, Madras. C.L.S. 1993. pp. 24-25.

The Revised English Bible renders the word translated 'fulfil' as 'complete'. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament we have the vision of the riches of the nations being brought to enrich the worship of God (Is. 60:11; Rev. 21:26). The riches or wealth of nations cannot be interpreted merely as material wealth. What the nations bring are whatever is true, beautiful and good in their culture and in their religious and spiritual heritage. God is the source of all that is true, beautiful and good everywhere. What we abandon through the acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is only whatever is sin and evil. All that is good and true in the different religions and cultures are ours and we are Christ's. Therefore, we have to find ways of taking back and appropriating as legitimately God's gift to us what we have been deprived of because of the wrong missionary policy. This is particularly true of the scriptures and festivals of the different Asian religions. The Christian Education programme of the different churches is one of the important instruments for re-education about our fuller religious heritage. The study of religions will, therefore, have direct consequences for the revision of Christian Education curricula.

In order to accept the Gospel one does not have to abandon whatever was good, beautiful and true in the older faith. The issue before the Jerusalem Council reported in Acts 15 was about the relation between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Jewish faith. The first converts to the Christian faith were all Jews, circumcised and committed to the Law of Moses. Some of the leaders of the church, the Judaisers assumed that the new converts from among the Gentiles, who had become believers as a result of the mission of Paul and Barnabas, should also be like the older converts receiving circumcision and accepting the law of Moses before being received into the church. The decision was that the new converts did not have to be like the old converts, that one did not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. The new converts were told that there was no intention to lay any great burden upon them. They were only asked to abstain 'from meat that has been offered to idols, from blood, from anything that has been strangled, and from fornication' (Acts 15:29).

It is interesting that nothing is mentioned about their abandoning completely all their religious beliefs and practices. They would have certainly had some religious faith and the practices associated with it. The decision taken meant that they were completely free to deal with their religious beliefs and practices in any way they felt guided. Only that which was discerned as evil or culturally objectionable needed to be given up. The new converts were free to develop the pattern of their discipleship of

Christ in any way they considered fit. In India some of the great converts such as Brahma Bandhav Upadhyaya and Manilal Parekh wanted to call themselves Hindu Christians. They held that they continued to be Hindus even while accepting discipleship of Christ. They only had to abandon whatever was contrary to the Gospel.

The traditional Christian response to the multifarious context in India was determined by the policies adopted by the western missions which had brought the Gospel to India. According to their policy the objective of the missionary and evangelistic outreach of the Church was to lead people to renounce their respective religious affiliations and to become Christians like them. It was assumed that Christianity which had taken shape in the west was normative. It may also be remembered that the missionaries who brought the Gospel converted our ancestors not just to the Christian faith but made them Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals etc. The divisions which had occurred in the west were transplanted into India as well.

The image of Christ which such missionary enterprise projected was that of the Imperial Christ rather than that of the Servant Christ of the Gospels. The policy may be traced back to what might be described as the Constantinian distortion of the Christian mission. Constantine's decision to give the Church the status of official religion of the empire completely distorted the image of the church. Prior to Constantine's conversion the Christians had been persecuted and the non-Christian religions had been recognised. Even though Constantine only gave recognition to Christianity along with other faiths, the policy adopted by the later emperors reversed the situation. While Christianity was made the official religion of the empire the other religions were proscribed and their adherents were persecuted.

As pointed out by David Bosch, in his book *TRANSFORMING MISSION*, 'Emperor Theodosius' decrees of 380 (which demanded that all Citizens of the Roman Empire be Christians) and 391 (which proscribed all non-Christian cults) inexorably pave the way for Pope Boniface's bull which proclaimed that the Catholic Church was the only institution guaranteeing salvation'.⁷

As Schillebeeckx has pointed out in his book on *MINISTRY*, 'From the sixth century on, the Popes had become the pawns of the emperors with their still influential Byzantine Caesaropapism..... We can follow many historians in saying that with the conversion of the 'barbarians' the church was made barbarian! Bishops who formerly had been independent and free now became the servants of

⁷ David Bosch: *Transforming Mission — Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991. p. 474

powerful seigneurs, secular lords, who to enhance their status built private churches and secured clergy for them at whim..... under the incipient feudal system, kings, counts and dukes had priests and even bishops under their control. At that time, *ecclesia* was no longer a living community as before, but often simply a status symbol of secular rulers with 'private churches'.⁸

After the reformation the Protestant rulers followed the same policy as the Roman emperors and whatever faith the rulers had adopted the people were also expected to follow. The policy was *cuius regio eius religio* (whoever is the ruler his is the religion). Thus Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism etc. became the official religion of different states. The freedom to develop the pattern of faith and practice implied in the decision of the Jerusalem Council was completely forgotten or abandoned. This was the background of the modern missions. As a result the different churches also have assumed that when a person became a believer in response to the evangelistic outreach he/she was expected to renounce completely the earlier faith.

The consequence of this policy has been disastrous for the Church's mission. In India only less than 3% of the large population have become Christian. Many who would have wanted to acknowledge faith in Christ were prevented from doing so because of the requirement that they renounce their Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Islamic or any other faith before becoming Christian. If they are told that Christ came to fulfil and not to abolish or destroy, and so they could believe in Christ without ceasing to belong to their religion many would have come forward to confess their faith in Christ. Believers in Christ may belong to different religious faiths, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism etc. This will also call for a new and radical ecclesiology, recognising a multi-faith community as the new Body of Christ.

The celebration of the Golden Jubilee should be an occasion for the Church to critically review the mission policy and to make a bold step to announce a more aggressive evangelistic approach to make Jesus Christ known to every one, to invite all to be disciples of Christ and at the same time to tell every one that Jesus Christ does not require them to renounce anything in their religious faith and practice which they hold as precious, as true, beautiful and good. Equally important is our willingness to be enriched by what is true, beautiful and good in other faiths.

3. Liberation from Evil

In adopting a missionary policy to deal with new converts the first Jerusalem Council did insist on the new converts adopted a new quality of life, free from whatever was discerned as culturally and morally evil. The list in

Acts 15:20 is based on the situation in the first century and is not adequate for our time today. We also need to bear in mind that while renouncing the earlier faiths the Indian churches did not insist on renouncing some of the evil traditions such as caste discrimination and male domination. Today we need to include among the evils to be renounced any form caste discrimination, sexism and involvement in any form of corruption. We also need to ask whether there is any justification for maintaining caste identity within the fellowship of the church.

Another serious evil in India is communalism. From time to time there have been violent outbursts of communal hatred resulting in loss of life and property. The concern for communal harmony, particularly since the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December, 1992, has resulted in several organizations working for the strengthening of secular democracy and communal harmony. The churches cannot remain simply as spectators. The commitment of the CSI for working towards unity has the objective overcoming all forms of disunity and disharmony including religious disunity. We are challenged to explore ways by which the churches may meaningfully exercise a ministry of reconciliation among people of different faiths. In this context one issue which may be taken as a concern for common quest is the issue of a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens of India. Certainly this is not a simple issue. As far as Christians are concerned, we cannot claim any civil laws or rights applicable exclusively for Christians and not to others. There is nothing in the Christian faith which will stand in the way of Uniform Civil Code for all.

4. Liberation from bondage to status quo

We have become got used to belonging to the CSI and we are not sensitive and receptive to the ways in which the Holy Spirit has been guiding the churches forward for the fulfillment of the purposes of God. When the CSI was inaugurated in 1947 there was a great deal of dynamism and enthusiasm about the event and commitment to be forward looking, for entering into new experiences and new dimensions of the oneness of the people of God. The CSI was described as a Church-in-via, a Pilgrim Church.

At the very first meeting of the Synod following the inauguration it was decided to explore the widening of the oneness of the church by union with other churches. An invitation was sent to all the non-Roman Catholic Churches for negotiations for union. The response of the Lutheran churches resulted in a period of theological conversations followed by union negotiations. A proposal was made for the CSI and the Lutheran churches to come together to form the Church of Christ in South India. There were a complexity of factors which prevented action for implementing the proposal. One of the factors was the failure to explore new models of unity.

⁸ Schillebeeckx. *Ministry-A Case for Change*. London, S.C.M. Press. 1981. p. 55

Soon after the formation of the CNI steps were initiated to implement an earlier commitment for the CSI and the CNI to come together to form the Church of India. This led to the formation of the Joint Council of the CNI-CSI-MTC. This was meant to bring the churches to manifest a new model of conciliar unity, going beyond the older concept of organic unity represented by the CSI and CNI models. One of the objectives of Church Union has been the coming together of churches, traditionally divided, into a visible structure of fellowship, and it is the visible union of churches which has been described as *organic unity*. It has been assumed that the union achieved by the C.S.I. and the C.N.I. was *organic unity*. The Joint-Council was also intended to give visible expression to the unity which it was believed and affirmed as already existing among the three churches. The coming together of the three churches in the Joint-Council implied a commitment to make their unity more visible. The Joint-Council was expected to move forward to explore ways of giving fuller and more visible expression of their unity. The Joint-Council is to be recognised as a new model of *organic unity*.

One of the components of the visible unity was the adoption of a common name for the church in which the three churches believed they belonged together. The name is important for the recognition of identity. While the C.S.I. and the C.N.I. have been willing to adopt a common name, the Mar Thoma Church has expressed some reservations. Even after clarifying that the adoption of a common name does not in any way affect the autonomy of the churches the MTC has not been willing to move forward to accept a common name.

It was in the process of the discussions and negotiations about the nature of the unity implied in the formation of the Joint-Council and the objectives for which the three churches are committed through their coming into the Joint-Council that the term *organic oneness* was used.

It needs to be clarified that no particular model of unity can be made the norm for unity for all time and for all places. Organic unity, for some, has been associated with 'a kind of static uniformity and organizational merger'. Others see in it 'a loss of identities, the deserve to be preserved'.⁹ A Concept of static organizational or institutional unity needed to be replaced by a concept which would express the dynamism, creativity and movement of a living organism. It became obvious that for the relationship of the three churches in the Joint-Council new models had to be explored. The C.S.I and the C.N.I.

models had become too stale and static. To describe the new model, the term *organic oneness* appeared to be more appropriate, even while affirming that the reality we were seeking was the same, namely, what our Lord Jesus Christ had in mind when he prayed for all those who would believe in him, 'May they all be one' (John 17:21). It is the organic oneness in the Body of Christ which is sought to be expressed in Conciliar Unity.

The members of the CSI need to be helped to realise that they are now not just members of the CSI but of a larger fellowship symbolised and expressed by the Joint Council of CNI-CSI-MTC. Our prayer at all our liturgical worship for not only the Moderator of the CSI, but also for the Moderator of the CNI and the Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church is not a mere a ritual. It implies an affirmation that all the three churches belong together and that we are committed to belong to the Joint Council as the new United Church, even though we have not agreed on an appropriate name for the new church.

Having arrived at the Joint Council we also need to be open, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, to moving forward to union with other churches as well, such as the Methodists, Baptists, the Lutherans and others, for making visible the union we have together in Christ.

5. Socio-political unity

The Jubilee Year in the Bible has a socio-political dimension. It stands for a periodic, once in fifty years, restructuring of the social, political and economic life of the people. The Jubilee Year renewal, therefore, is not just for the renewal of the Church but also for the renewal of the nation. This is particularly relevant in our situation because this year we also celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our national independence.

The objective of the Jubilee Year of the Bible in this regard is clear. It has a secular dimension inspired by the religious faith. The social and economic inequalities among the people, resulting from exploitation and oppression by the powerful or laziness and lack of enterprise on the part of the weak, are not to be perpetuated for ever. They have to be removed periodically and an equitable and just distribution of wealth and power is to be restored. In Deut. 15:4-5 it is categorically affirmed that 'there will never be any poor among you if only you obey the Lord your God by carefully keeping these commandments'.

The Biblical affirmation of faith in God is an affirmation that God is a liberator. According to the Book of Exodus the people of Israel suffered economically, socially, politically, culturally and spiritually under the Egyptian masters. They were treated as their private property and were denied the basic human rights by both the landowners, contractors etc. and the state machinery. The

⁹ Aram Keshishian: *Conciliar Fellowship — A Common Goal*. Geneva. W.C.C. Publications, 1992. P. 64

people's cry of pain reached God and God was involved in the people's struggle for liberation. The Exodus theme continues all through the Bible. God liberated the people of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. Amos declares that God liberated not only Israel but also other nations, the Philistines and the Aramaeans (Amos 9:7). The people were constantly reminded by the prophets that they were a people liberated by God and so they should not adopt any structure that will keep people under bondage to any form of oppression. They were to be committed to an egalitarian structure. The Jubilee vision is biased in favour of the poor, the slaves, the marginalized, the oppressed, the dispossessed, the homeless and the deprived.

The Jubilee Year Liberation for our nation calls for identifying the different structures of oppression from which people suffer. Our independence in 1947 was liberation from colonial rule. It did not bring liberation to a vast section of people living in poverty, unemployment, caste oppression etc. Even today about 40% of the people, which is about 400 millions live below poverty line. About 220 millions are marginalised as Dalits and the situation requires analysis of the socio-political structures and armed with results of such study mobilising of the people for their struggle for justice and restoration of full human dignity. It is also important to realise that the situation

of oppression people experience in India was not brought about only by western colonialism. The consequences of the Aryan conquest and the imposition of Brahmin domination continue to keep the Dalits oppressed.

It is crucial that we rightly understand the forces of colonialism which have affected the socio-political reality in India. Following the Canberra Assembly of the WCC a new programme for indigenous peoples was adopted. First it was applied to indigenous populations of Australia, New Zealand etc. Later the Dalits in India were also included. It is important to identify the poverty, landlessness etc. suffered by the Dalits and the backwardness of the tribal as the consequence of the marginalization of the indigenous peoples by the Aryans about 4000 years ago.

The caste structure adopted from vedic times, legitimized by the Manu Dharma Sashtra is an enslaving one. It has to be abolished in order to liberate large sections of people. Women also are to be liberated from male domination. The celebration of the Jubilee Year of the Church of South India as well as the nation is an occasion for identifying the oppressive structures, mobilising the people for struggle against those structures and adopting programmes for liberation.



Jubilee Prayer

O Lord, our God, you are one: one Lord, one Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer; and you call us to be one people and one family. We give you thanks for the breaking down of barriers that have divided the churches through the centuries by creating the Church of South India. We thank you for the sharing of worship, for the sharing in service and help to people in need; for the coming together of different denominations; and for the recognition that we all belong to the one God. We give thanks that the Holy Spirit is calling us to express our oneness in Christ in new ways.

O Lord, we are truly sorry for the many times when we do not behave like your one family. Father, forgive us:

for our pride when we want to do your work on our own;
for our lack of vision when we are unable to see beyond our own little church;
for our fear when we prefer the safety of our familiar practices;

for our hypocrisy when we proclaim that we belong together but fail to love each other and act in close family spirit;
for our unfaithfulness to you when we forget our brothers and sisters.

Help us, Lord to grow together in Christian Unity, to learn to love each other so that we might be a closer family for your sake. Give us grace to break down any barriers that still divide us from our fellow human beings; strengthen the witness we make together in our place; and open our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit that we may join more fully in the common mission you have given to your Church. Keep us active in seeking that fuller unity for which you have prayed, that we may be one even as you and the Father are one. We ask this for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen.**

Convener
Synod Liturgy Committee

C.S.I. Lectionary—May 1997

May 4 Sun *Fifth Sunday After Easter*

*Jesus' Ascension (going to the Father):
Glorious Destiny*

Dan. 7 : 9-14 Eph. 4 : 1-10
Ps. 67 John 16 : 25-33
Gen. 28 : 10-22 Acts 7 : 54-60

May 6 Tue *John the Apostle and Evangelist:*

The Disciple who Testifies

Ex. 33 : 7-23 1 John 1
Ps. 27 John 21 : 15-25

May 8 Thu *Ascension Day:*

Receiving Power from Above

2 Kigs 2 : 1-15 Acts 1 : 1-11
Ps. 47 Luke 24 : 44-53
Isa. 65 : 17-25 Acts 1 : 12-26

May 11 Sun *Sixth Sunday After Easter*

*Christ : The High Priest who Shares our
Experiences*

Gen. 14 : 14-20 Heb. 4 : 14-16

Ps. 110 John 12 : 20-33

Ex. 28 : 1-6, 15-30 John 17 : 1-19

May 18 Sun *The Pentecost:*

The Holy Spirit

*Lord and Giver of Life:
(The Spirit Gives Life)*

Joel 2 : 28-32 Acts 2 : 1-12
Ps. 29 John 14 : 15-26
Ezek. 37 : 1-14 1 Cor. 12 : 1-13

After Pentecost

May 25 Sun *Next Sunday After Pentecost*

The Holy Trinity:

*The Father, The Son and
The Holy Spirit*

Isa. 6 : 1-8 Rev. 4
Ps. 98 Matt. 28 : 16-20
Ezek. 1 : 15-2 : 2 2 Cor. 13 : 11-13

— THE SYNOD LITURGY COMMITTEE



News and Views

CONSECRATION OF NEW BISHOPS

Rev. Emmanuel Kesari was consecrated as the Bishop in Kanyakumari Diocese of the CSI on February 3rd 1997.

Rev. S. Vasanthkumar was consecrated as the Bishop in Karnataka Central Diocese on February 26th 1997.

To the Editor,

Dear Sir,

I am a presbyter of C.S.I. South Kerala Diocese. I conducted C.S.I. Communion at Salem Mar Thoma Church, Kundara, Quilon and the Assistant Vicar of above church conducted Mar Thoma Communion at C.S.I. Marnad, Quilon on Unity Sunday 1990. It was possible because of like minded priests.

As invited, the Vicar and his associates of Mar Thoma Church, Balaramapuram, Trivandrum came to C.S.I. Paraniyam, Trivandrum and conducted Mar Thoma Communion on Unity Sunday 1992. C.S.I. Paraniyam, where I was ministering, expected a return invitation and we have, until today, not received.

My own Diocese has forgotten Unity Sunday in 1995-1997 and presbyters have forgotten which day is the Unity Sunday. I propose that a survey must be done to seek the quality and quantity of 'exchange of pulpits and communion' among C.S.I. and Mar Thoma Churches in Kerala, since Joint Council.

Marnad and Paraniyam are two villages in Kerala. The church members have expressed that this celebration is an superimposition of worship which is alien to them, and they never felt at home. The worship in Kerala is always attached with caste, which is the undercurrent and accepted truth. Personally, as a presbyter, on second thoughts, I never felt at home because such communion for the sake of communion is not natural.

As a Keralite, I know that the 'Coming in' and 'Going out' of C.S.I. and Mar Thoma is, was and will be natural. After the implementation of Joint Council, the whole process is artificial. We all know each other during past centuries and we have accepted other because each has its own authentic styles in worship.

The Joint Council has not penetrated into village churches. I have with me the Symbol of Joint Council. The two hands are united in love. The radiant beams are emanating from the cross which is implanted in the length

and breadth of India. I appreciate the 'open endedness' of the cross. But, who has popularised this symbol in villages? Who was expounded its meaning? Specifically, Joint Council is not in the agenda of the village people, the presbyters and Vicars of C.S.I. and Mar Thoma. The chapter of Joint Council must always opened and I propose that Methodist church of North India and Lutheran Churches of India must be included on 1.1.2001.

The 'Unity Workers', who formed C.S.I. and C.N.I. have accepted facts as facts; and so the present concern is not a sensitive issue. We have forgotten the vision of 'Unity workers' and are having complacent rest in the wayside inn of 'Joint Council'. Hence, I call upon C.S.I. and C.N.I to open a new chapter of unity. The God of 'that they all may be one' is with us. The Ecclesiastical history of Kerala reminds that the greater union with Mar Thoma Church is a not a possibility.

Let this be the agenda of 'Unity Workers' of C.S.I and C.N.I upto 2000 AD. We have to start a new dialogue for greater Union. And I propose that the united church of C.S.I and C.N.I be inaugurated on 1.1.2001.

In Christ

Sd. REV. THOMAS DAVID

OBSERVANCE OF LENT DURING CSI JUBILEE YEAR - CSI RAYALASEEMA DIOCESE

Lenten Fast 1997

Congregations undertake seven-day fast to set free villages in Adoni area from the scourge of untouchability. Dates: March 16th to 22nd 1997.

* Church members who are agricultural labourers shall fast from Sun-rise to Sun-set.

* Other members shall fast all seven days without a break.

* Breaking of the Bread by the Rt. C.B.M. Frederick, Bishop in Rayalaseema on Saturday, 22nd at 4.00 p.m. at the address given below:

Yours in lenten Bond

Members of village congregations & Urban congregations in Adoni & Alur Divisions, Division Pastors & Rev. R. Daniel Premkumar. Divisional Chairman, Adoni & Alur Division.

CSI Compound 5th Road

SKD Colony, Adoni 518301 A.P.

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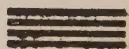
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